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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

681

DATE: June 3, 1954

SUBJECT: Proposed Consultative Meeting on Guatemalan Situation

PARTICIPANTS: Victor Andrade, Ambassador of Bolivia

Assistant Secretary Holland
OSA - Mr. Topping

COPIES TO: ARA - Mr. Holland (2) Mr. Woodward; Mr. Pearson; Mr. Pawley
AR - Mr. Cale, Mr. Jamison; Amb. Dreier; Mr. Sanders
MID - Mr. Burrows, Mr. Leddy
OSA - Mr. Atwood
DRA
Embassy, La Paz; Embassy, Guatemala City
ARA/P - Mr. Wieland; Mr. Herron

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Mr. Holland had requested the Ambassador to call. After an exchange of amenities, he said that the United States wished to call a consultative meeting of the members of the OAS under the provisions of the Rio Treaty to consider the situation in Guatemala. The meeting would be called only if it appeared that practical, effective resolutions would be adopted. Those resolutions would include a finding that Guatemalan institutions had been deeply penetrated by the international communist conspiracy, that the recent shipment of armaments to Guatemala from a Curtain source constituted convincing evidence of such penetration, and that the Guatemalan situation constituted a threat to the peace and security of the Hemisphere. Therefore, the resolutions should continue, the other American Republics should take action to prevent Guatemala from obtaining further armaments from communist sources, and to restrict the travel of communist agents to and from Guatemala. Actions taken by the members of the OAS in response to the resolution should include the interception of shipping to Guatemala, the detention of armaments so found, and the control of international passenger traffic to and from that country.

Mr. Holland explained that Congressional and public opinion in the United States was greatly exercised over the Guatemalan situation and the recent covert arms shipment, and was insistent that effective steps be taken immediately to remove the threat to the peace of the Hemisphere which that situation constituted. It was the desire of the United States Government that actions to counteract the menace be taken within the framework of the Inter-American system and the measures provided for by that system. It would be fully apparent to the Ambassador that it lay within the power of the United States to take action of an economic nature which would result in the collapse of the Guatemalan economy within a very brief period. However, the United States had no present intention of taking such action, and proposed only that the OAS take the minimum action necessary to remove the menace created by the present situation in Guatemala. It was the opinion of the United States

DECLASSIFIED E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.3 NLE 82-162 By [illegible] NARS, Date 2/9/82

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States Government that the people of Guatemala were not communistic, and did not desire a communist government. However, following the established pattern of infiltration and of indirect control of key groups, organizations and agencies, international communism had now achieved domination of the Guatemalan government. The United States had no intention nor desire to intervene in Guatemala's internal affairs, and it was considered that the proposed course of action did not constitute such intervention. Rather, it would be action taken by the OAS in response to a threat to the peace and security of the Hemisphere which had arisen as a result of intervention by the international communist conspiracy, led by Russia, in Guatemalan internal affairs. Basically, the quarrel was with the communist conspiracy, and not with Guatemala. That conspiracy constituted a world-wide threat to the institutions in which the nations of the free world believed. It was to the advantage of all nations of the Hemisphere that the movement be contained and defeated wherever it appeared, and it became urgently necessary to do so when the movement appeared in this hemisphere. The United States had given unstintingly of its resources in opposing the conspiracy in other areas of the world, and the lives of many of its young men had been lost in the struggle. While the United States had been fighting primarily for its own security, the security of the Hemisphere also depended on the outcome of the struggle. It was felt that the least that the members of the OAS, devoted to the principles of democracy and freedom of the individual, could do was to participate fully in the struggle when the conflict appeared in this Hemisphere.

Mr. Holland emphasized that the United States was determined to win the struggle. The steps taken had been increasingly strong from Rio to Bogota to Caracas. The Guatemalan Government had responded to the anti-Communism resolution of Caracas by smuggling 2,000 tons of communist armaments into their country. It was therefore obvious that the stronger measures the United States was now proposing were necessary. Our immediate result of those measures would be the defeat of the communist conspiracy in Guatemala, or public identification of the Guatemalan Government itself as Communist. Mr. Holland stressed that the United States hoped to avoid inflicting hardship on the Guatemalan people if at all possible, and to avoid creating abiding resentments or discords among the nations of the Hemisphere. It was felt, he said, that the proposed course of action was consistent with those hopes.

Mr. Holland stated that this matter had nothing whatever to do with Guatemalan treatment of United States private investments in that country. If Guatemala paid the United Fruit Company tomorrow the full amount claimed by that company as compensation for the properties of which it had been deprived, the views and proposals of the United States as he had expounded them would not change one iota. As the Ambassador was well aware, the policies of the United States concerning the protection it afforded private investments of its citizens in other countries were clear, consistent, and often disturbing. The United States had followed those policies in Guatemala, and would continue to do so. The question of Communism in countries of the Hemisphere, of communist governments in the Hemisphere, and of how to deal with them, existed separate and apart from the question of the protection of private foreign investment in the Hemisphere.

Mr. Holland

Mr. Holland told the Ambassador that the United States hoped that Bolivia would support the proposed course of action. The United States felt that the Government of Bolivia had broadly based popular support and that it was engaged in a determined effort to improve the lot of the Bolivian people. Its decision in connection with the proposed action would have particular significance. For the Ambassador's fuller understanding of the problem, he recounted in some detail the data concerning the recent arms shipment to Guatemala as it had been developed to date, and gave him two copies of a study entitled "Soviet Communism in Guatemala".

Ambassador Andrade said that he would immediately inform his Government of the conversation. He had not previously consulted his Government, and had no commitments or observations which he was empowered to make. Speaking personally, he could say that from his student days he had been completely opposed to the doctrines espoused by communism, and had fought them consistently throughout his public career. He recognized the extreme seriousness of the situation in Guatemala, and agreed that some action was necessary. He could not predict what his Government would do, since a decision to approve collective consultation followed possibly by collective corrective action would be extremely difficult for his Government and would create delicate and dangerous internal problems in view of the experience of the Governmental party at the time of recognition of the Villaroel regime in 1944, and the consequent party policy of opposition to what it classified as "collective intervention".

The Ambassador said that in general terms, and without specific reference to the United States proposals on Guatemala, he felt that a positive program to combat communism was necessary, rather than a series of sterile anti-communist resolutions. He felt that one phase of such a program consisted in improving the conditions of life for the underprivileged groups of the world. The program of his Government in Bolivia was a step in that direction. The great help which the United States was giving that program was deeply appreciated by his Government. Mr. Holland expressed general agreement with the Ambassador's observations, and expressed his appreciation for the time and attention the Ambassador had given to his exposition of the Guatemalan situation and the course of action proposed by the United States.

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